

**Reflection, Reproduction, and Challenging at the Brooklyn
Zen Center: Complexifying Cultural Capital, Gentrification,
the Mindfulness Movement, and Scale**

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*Light creates understanding
Understanding creates love
Love creates patience
And patience creates unity*

-Malcolm X

*America's unique stamp on and responsibility to Buddhism lies in this culture's
capacity to formulate a practice of Dharma that transcends boundaries of race, class,
gender, and sexuality.*

-angel Kyodo Williams in, *Being Black: Zen and the Art of Living with Fearlessness and
Grace*

Abstract

This project analyzes the Brooklyn Zen Center as a case study in order to complexify our understandings of cultural capital, gentrification, the modern American mindfulness movement, and geographic scale. Through an analysis focused at the local scale, we see how the Brooklyn Zen Center both reflects/reproduces and challenges the socio-racial-economic tension associated with gentrification and the mindfulness movement. Through an analysis focused at the scale of the individual/interpersonal, we see how cultural capital both reflects/reproduces and challenges the socio-racial-economic tension associated with the mindfulness movement.

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Preface

Why *this* project?

Personally, I have been fascinated with mindfulness every since I was a young boy. When I was in my early teens, I often went on long walks through the rural Vermont forest where I grew up and practiced Apache mindfulness exercises that my neighbor had taught me. Years later, I was forced to take time off from college because of several chronic health issues. With free time on my hands and in the midst of the psychological stress that is often associated with health problems, I figured it would be a good time to practice mindfulness more seriously. I was blessed to find Shinzen Young, an inspiring, brilliant, mature, and compassionate teacher. Over the next year, mindfulness not only played a central role in facilitating my physical and psychological healing, but also began to unveil deep meaning in my life.

I now see my life's vision as three fold: to practice, teach, and research mindfulness. This project is a facet of my sojourn into researching mindfulness. As this project is a Geography thesis, I adopt a social science methodology. I am also interested in studying mindfulness using other methodologies. For example, I am currently conducting a Cognitive Science experiment about mindfulness pedagogy.

I would like to thank several people that inspired this project and made this project possible. Thank you, parents for instilling in me a passion for mindfulness and social justice. Thank you, housemates for helping me clarify my vision for this project. Thank you, Soryu Forall for showing me how mindfulness and social justice

can intersect. Thank you, Brian Godfrey for your helpful feedback. Thank you, Ian Case and Greg Snyder for being my primary contacts at the Brooklyn Zen Center and for supplying me with much of the information that I present in Chapter Two. I would also like to thank Vassar's Department of Earth Science and Geography for covering the travel costs associated with this project.

Chapter One:

An Introduction to the Study of the Brooklyn Zen Center

On a calm, cool Thursday evening I exit the Carroll Gardens subway station and make my way through a pleasant neighborhood filled with mothers, strollers, dogs, trees, flowers, coffee shops, and quaint family abodes. I'm on my way to the Brooklyn Zen Center in Gowanus to attend their evening mindfulness sit. I cross the stinky Gowanus canal, which still suffers from centuries of industrial discharge. When I arrive at the center, I notice that it is housed in a newly renovated factory building. I enter the building and make my way up some stairs, only to find that the door into the center is locked. I sit patiently on a nearby windowsill. Soon, I spot a brightly smiling lady making her way down the hall, toward me. "Need a key?" she asks, in a jocular tone. As I perused the Brooklyn Zen Center's website before coming, I immediately recognize her as the head teacher and shift into 'make a good impression' mode.

"Sure do." I politely respond. We enter the center, she shows me where to put my shoes and I begin to wander around while we wait for more participants to show up. I find myself in their small library. As I am relatively well acquainted with mindfulness literature, I recognize many of the authors and titles, which makes me feel at home. I then make my way into the main room where I see a few white, upper-middle class Brooklyn Zen Center members chatting quietly or reading. I am immediately drawn to a series of paintings that line the eastern wall, which depict diverse and imaginative drawings of meditators. The head teacher notices the direction of my gaze as she walks past and asks if I know the story behind the paintings. I tell her I do not and she proceeds to hand me a pamphlet about the paintings. It turns out the paintings were produced by members of the center's Awake Youth Project, which is a program that provides mindfulness instruction for high schoolers from all over Brooklyn.

One painting in particular stands out. In this piece, the space outside of an outlined meditator is overwhelmingly filled with cutouts of sensual female bodies from popular magazines. Yet the space inside the outlined meditator is left completely white, except for the words "I am not" and arrows that point to the meditator's body. The piece clearly conveys that this young meditator does not simply define him or her self by their body or, more specifically, by what popular magazines say is 'sexy.' Faint phrases bounce around my deeply moved conscience: 'Wow, the kid really gets it; they get what mindfulness is all about; getting over yourself in the healthiest of ways.'

'Crack!' the ceremonial striking of a woodblock signals the start of the evening sit. I make my way into the zendo¹ to find a place to sit. I end up sitting next to a young man who looks about 17 years old and I can't help but wonder if he was the awoken youth who made the painting I had just enjoyed.

* * *

The above personal vignette introduces many of the central themes of my project. First, we encounter *cultural capital* (I recognize many of the books in the library). Second, we see *gentrification* in Brooklyn (a stinky industrial canal next to quaint family homes). Third, we encounter the *modern American mindfulness movement* (The Brooklyn Zen Center is an example of the many mindfulness community centers that have sprung up throughout America over the past fifty

¹ 'Zendo' is a Japanese word that roughly translates as 'meditation hall.'

years), *mindful awareness* (a teenager healthily transcend his/her body), and *mindfulness practice* (I am there to attend an evening mindfulness sit). Fourth, we encounter the *Brooklyn Zen Center*, which is a burgeoning mindfulness community center in Gowanus, Brooklyn. Fifth, we see *social justice* (a teenager is empowered by transcending his/her body image). Sixth, we see *interaction at the interpersonal scale* (I interact with the head teacher). Seventh, we encounter an entity at *the local scale* (The Brooklyn Zen Center is a local organization). In order to more fully understand these themes, let's review relevant literature.

Cultural Capital

Before defining cultural capital, we need to define class. According to Karl Marx, a class is a group of people that have a similar relationship to the means of production (Croteau, 1995). For example, if you own a factory, then you are in the 'upper class' or the bourgeoisie. However, if you work at a factory, then you are in the 'lower class' or the proletariat. Thus, Marx primarily defines class using economic positionality.

According to Max Weber, there is more to class than economic position. For Weber, a class is a group of people who share common economic positions *and* skills or education (Weber, 1946; Croteau, 1995). For example, if you are a professor, you may not make an inordinate amount of money, but you shouldn't be included in the proletariat because you occupy a high rung in the social order. Adding *social* position to our conceptualization of class allows us to see intermediate classes such as the 'upper-middle' class that share some things with the bourgeoisie (such as

skills or education) and other things with the proletariat (such as having to work hard in order to make a living).

Lastly, race and class are inextricably linked in modern America. Broadly speaking, people of color make up the proletariat and white people make up the upper-middle class and the bourgeoisie (Jenson, 2012). We now have a conceptualization of class that is made up of three intertwined axes: economic position (Marx), social position (Weber), and race (Jenson). In this paper, I will use the term, 'socio-racial-economic class' to summarize this three-pronged conceptualization of class. With class defined, we can now turn our attention to cultural capital.

Cultural capital is defined in various ways within social science literature. Most commonly, cultural capital is defined as: *intellectual or other knowledge* (patterns of speech, vocabulary, tastes, aesthetics, dress, mannerisms, customs, beliefs, cultural backgrounds, dispositions of mind or body, worldviews, skills, etc.) *that reflect/reproduce socio-racial-economic relations* (Bourdieu, 1990; Jenson, 2012). For example, meet John. John knows a lot about art history and this helps him to schmooze with a CEO who loves reminiscing about the art history class she took in college. The CEO is so enamored by her new friend who shares her interest in art history that she offers John a high paying job. Another example, meet Maria. The people Maria grew up with used 'slang' that was deemed inappropriate in her high school such as, 'ya'll,' 'doin,' and 'sup wit you?'. Therefore, Maria struggled in school, dropped out, and became unemployed.

Both of these examples are obviously over-simplistic, but they at least convey a basic understanding of how cultural capital works: what you know can help you get ahead; what you don't know can keep you from getting ahead. A question that immediately arises at this point in the discussion is: 'Well, what kinds of knowledge helps you get ahead and what kinds of knowledge don't?' Yet this question is misguided for what helps you get ahead in one setting, may not help you get ahead in other settings. For example, using slang may not help you succeed in public high school, but it may help you get a job at a groovy record store.

Leaving this particularity aside, we can say that, *in general*, the cultural capital of the bourgeoisie and the upper-middle class is the most useful for getting ahead because people in the bourgeoisie and the upper-middle class are economically and/or socially successful; they 'own factories' and 'write dissertations'. In other words, knowing *bourgeoisie* and *upper-middle class* movie references, dress styles, hobbies, etc. will help you attain economic and social success for people in the bourgeoisie and the upper-middle class are often in positions of managerial and social power (Jenson, 2012). Cultural capital reflects/reproduces socio-racial-economic relations².

It is important to note that bourgeoisie and upper-middle class cultural capital is not stable throughout time or space. Indeed, what was considered bourgeoisie and upper-middle class cultural capital during the 1600s is different

² There are, of course, an infinity of factors other than cultural capital that affect one's ability to succeed in modern America. For example, gender, sexuality, 'who you know,' ect. In order to increase the depth of my analysis, I am bracketing these other factors in order to focus exclusively on how *cultural capital* affects socio-racial-economic relations.

from what is currently considered bourgeoisie and upper-middle class cultural capital.

It is also critical to note that the evaluation of someone's cultural capital is almost always *unconscious*. In other words, cultural capital is rarely thought about explicitly, and is instead, *just lived* (Holt, 2008; Gregson and Rose, 2000). For example, Sam introduces Jill to a bourgeoisie artist because he unconsciously senses her bourgeoisie cultural capital.

So what does modern American bourgeoisie and upper-middle class cultural capital look like? In a broad sense, it is based upon the cultural capital of the historical European aristocracy and central tenets include: fine art, literature, and humanitarian efforts (Jenson, 2012). A large subset of the upper-middle class value an urban lifestyle and they therefore move to urban areas. This contributes to gentrification, an important process to which we now turn.

Gentrification

Gentrification can be broadly defined as the local improvement of housing and infrastructure and the associated displacement of one socio-racial-economic class from their neighborhood by a 'higher' socio-racial-economic class (Smith, 1996). Within urban geography, there is substantial literature on gentrification. An important question that is explored in this literature is 'what causes gentrification?' Some researchers emphasize a 'supply-side' explanation and put forth the following schematic: the movement of economic capital from the city (because of suburbanization or deindustrialization) causes real-estate values to decrease in

certain neighborhoods. Perceptive developers see such decreases in realty values, yet nonetheless reinvest in these neighborhoods, looking to find renters and make a profit. This increases real-estate prices far above historic levels, which effectively forces the 'native' community out (Smith, 1996). In other words, developers produce the displacement of natives and the associated changes in housing and infrastructure.

Other researchers emphasize a 'demand-side' explanation and put forth this schematic: Over the past few decades in cities across the US, the number of service-sector jobs have increased while the number of unskilled manufacturing jobs have decreased. As a result, the people who used to live just outside city centers are being forced to live elsewhere by an influx of people in the upper-middle class who can take advantage of the service-sector jobs (Blum, 2009). In other words, gentrification reflects large-scale changes in the US economy.

It is important to note that supply-side and demand-side explanations of gentrification are not mutually exclusive. Many scholars, myself included, accept both as complementary explanations (Kern, 2012). In other words, gentrification is both a reflection (of the US economy) and a product (of developers).

Another important thread of the geographic literature on gentrification concerns the effects of gentrification on socio-racial-economic relations. There are numerous studies that show how gentrification reflects/reproduces tension between socio-racial-economic classes. Such studies put forth the following evidence to support their claim: the displacement of original residents and decreases in the availability of affordable housing (Ley, 1981; Cybriwsky, 1978;

Legates and Hamilton, 1986), resentment and community conflict between newcomers and old-timers (Chernoff, 1980), increased crime, homelessness, and racial homogeneity (Atkinson, 2002), and decreases in social capital and senses of community (Blum, 2009).

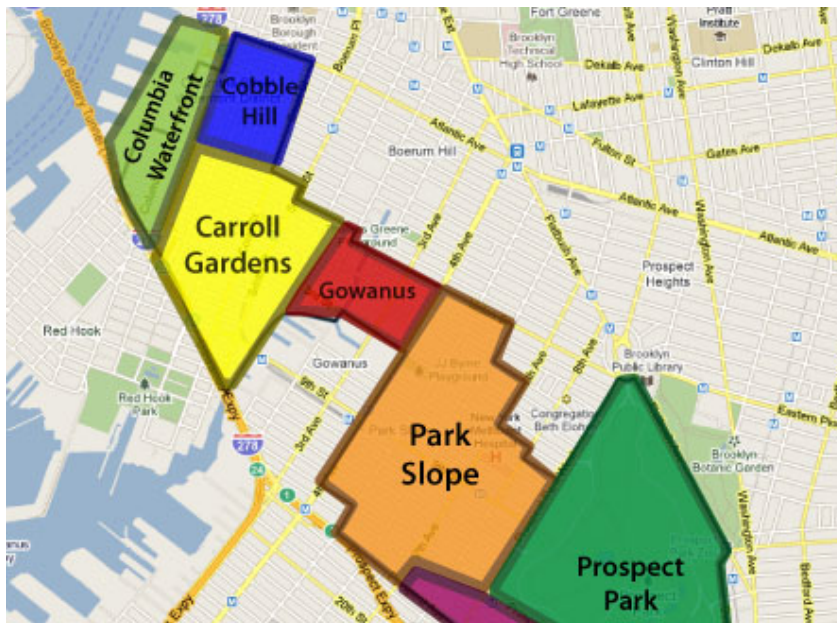
Now that we've looked at gentrification broadly, let's see if gentrification is taking place in the neighborhoods where members of the Brooklyn Zen Center reside. Most of the members of the Brooklyn Zen Center come from downtown Brooklyn neighborhoods such as Park Slope, Carroll Gardens, Gowanus, Prospect Heights, Fort Greene, Clinton Hill and Boerum Hill (Snyder, 2014). In order to increase the depth of my analysis, I will focus exclusively on Park Slope and Carroll Gardens. First, let's look at a series of maps in order to locate these two neighborhoods within New York City.

Lower Manhattan and Brooklyn:



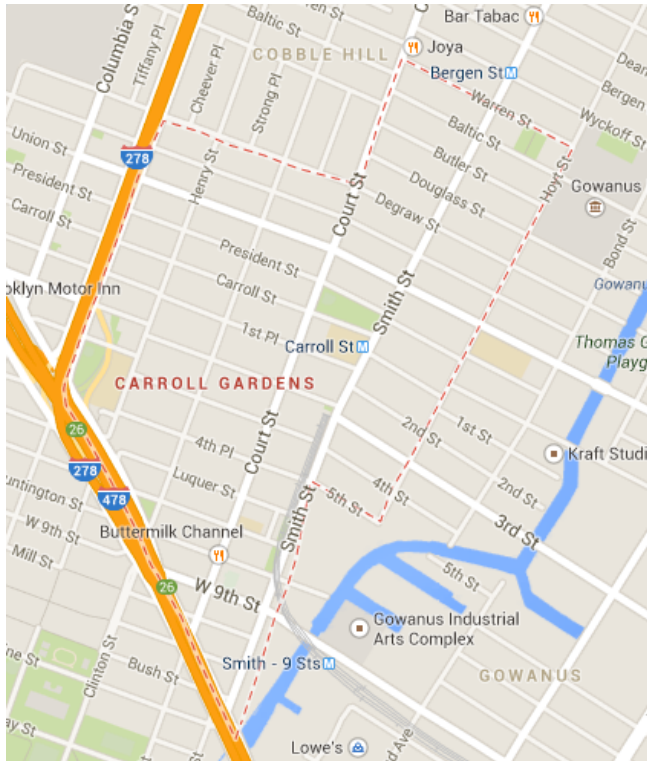
Source: maps.google.com

Various Brooklyn Neighborhoods:



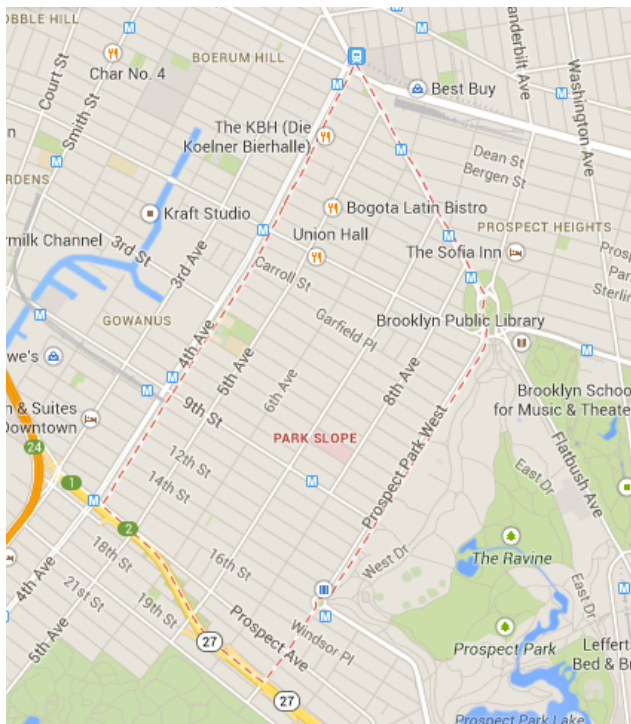
Source: bradlander.com

Carroll Gardens:



Source: maps.google.com

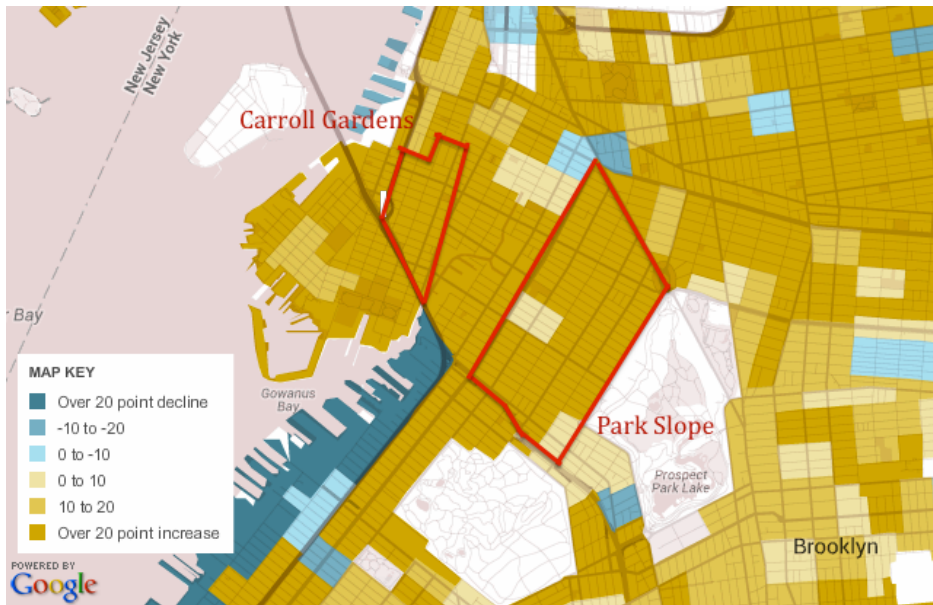
Park Slope:



Source: maps.google.com

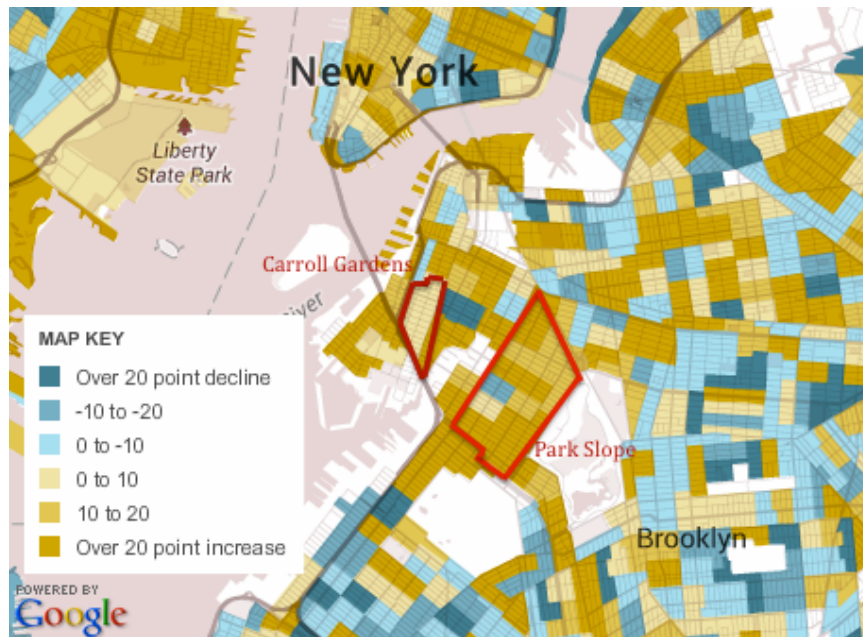
As we learned above, gentrification involves housing and infrastructure improvement. One way to detect such improvement is to look at changes in median monthly rent prices. Here is a map that presents this information.

Changes in median monthly rent from 2000 to 2009



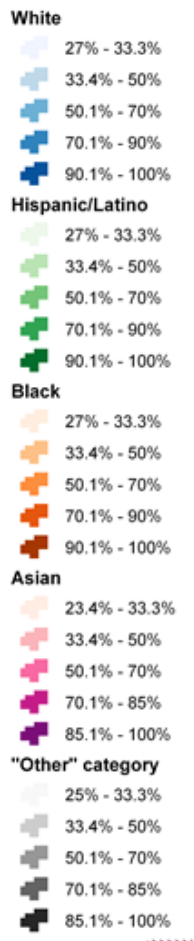
As you can see, both Carroll Gardens and Park Slope are mostly dark brown, which means that median monthly rent prices increased 20% between 2000 and 2009. This is evidence of the housing and infrastructure improvements associated with gentrification. Gentrification also involves the displacement of the proletariat by the upper-middle class. As economic position is a facet of class, one way to detect such displacement is to look for changes in median household incomes. Here is a map that presents this information.

Changes in median household income from 2000 to 2009



As you can see, there is more brown in Carroll Gardens and Park Slope than in the rest of Brooklyn, which means that median annual household incomes have increased. This is evidence of an influx of the upper-middle class, which is characteristic of gentrification. As race is also facet of class, another way to detect the displacement of the proletariat by the upper-middle class is look at changes in the racial make up of neighborhoods. Here are a series of maps that show changes in the racial make up of Carroll Gardens and Park Slope.

**Plurality group's
population % per
Census block:**

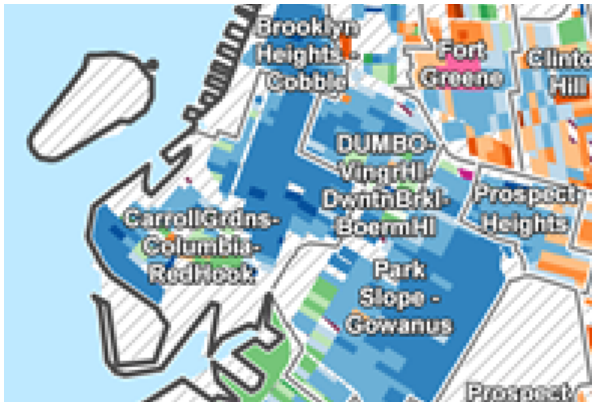


Racial makeup of Brooklyn in 2000



Source: urbanresearchmaps.org

Racial makeup of Brooklyn in 2010



Source: urbanresearchmaps.org

As you can see, in Carroll Gardens and Park Slope, there is less green and more blue in the 2010 map than in the 2000 map, which means a flight of people of color and an influx of white people. This is evidence of an influx of the upper-middle class, which is characteristic of gentrification.

To sum up, Carroll Gardens and Park Slope have experienced increases in rent, income, and their white population. Therefore, the neighborhoods of Carroll Gardens and Park Slope have experienced housing and infrastructure improvements, a flight of the proletariat, and an influx of the upper-middle class. Taken together, this is evidence of gentrification in these neighborhoods. As most of the Brooklyn Zen Center's members come from downtown Brooklyn neighborhoods including Carroll Gardens and Park Slope, we can say that many of the members reside in gentrifying areas and that the BZC, as an organization, is entangled with the process of gentrification.

In addition to taste for the urban lifestyle, the cultural capital of gentrifiers also includes: "shopping for organic food, fair trade coffee, local goods, foods, and

arts; walking and biking to work; taking public transit; sitting in cafes and drinking in trendy bars; and even going to yoga class” (Kern 2012, 29). Alongside yoga, mindfulness is another popular interest in gentrifying communities and it is to mindfulness that we now turn.

Mindfulness

Like most words, mindfulness has many meanings, uses, and connotations. Mindfulness can refer to an awareness, a set of practices, a path, a translation, a movement, a shadow, or a possible revolution (Young, 2013). In this paper, I use the word ‘mindfulness’ in three contexts: mindfulness practice, mindful awareness, and the mindfulness movement. First, let’s discuss the modern American mindfulness movement.

In 1893, an Indian Yogi named Vivekananda was invited to the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, IL. He electrified the audience with his discussion of mindfulness practice as a ‘common thread,’ which unites all of the world’s religions. Pockets of mindfulness practice groups began popping up in the West. During WWII, many US soldiers who fought in the South Pacific established intimate contact with local cultures. Monks who seemed impervious to suffering fascinated soldiers, many of whom stayed in Asia in order to join monasteries. When these soldiers returned home, they further increased awareness of mindfulness practices (Reynolds, 2011).

In the 1950s, beat generation writers such as Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg mentioned mindfulness practices in their works. At the same time, Western

psychology began to look more closely at relaxation, biofeedback, and the workings of consciousness. In 1962, a little known Indian sage named Maharishi Mahesh published books on *The Science of Being* and *The Art of Living*. His followers included the Beatles and other popular figures. Concurrently, the Dalai Lama began to exert significant influence on Western thought and became a world leader in the eyes of many. Mindfulness practices had gained significant public recognition (Reynolds, 2011).

This trend continues today. Hundreds of scientific papers that document the benefits of mindfulness practices are published every year and prominent figures, such as Ohio congressmen, Tim Ryan, publish books on mindfulness (Vishvapani, 2012).

Let's take a second look at the major influences of the modern American mindfulness movement: beat generation writers, The Beatles, and scientific papers. What is one socio-racial-economic class that was/is exposed to such influences? The upper-middle class. Therefore, the modern American mindfulness movement is predominantly made up of the upper-middle class. As social, racial, and economic segregation is associated with inter-group tension, we can say that the modern American mindfulness movement reflects/reproduces tension between socio-racial-economic classes (I will flesh out this idea more in Chapter Three) (Kern, 2012).

What binds the modern American mindfulness movement together is an interest in developing mindfulness awareness. Mindful awareness can be defined as, the use of three core attentional skills: concentration power (one's ability to remain focused on what one deems relevant at any given time), sensory clarity

(one's ability to accurately perceive the spatial, temporal, qualitative, quantitative, relational, and dynamic aspects of one's sensory experience), and equanimity (one's ability to allow sensory experience to come and go without push or pull) (Young, 2011).

Mindfulness practices are simply mental exercises that effectively³ cultivate mindful awareness (Young, 2013). Outside of mindfulness, 'practice' is also a specific conceptual term that is elaborated upon in a vast social science literature. I wish to incorporate relevant insights from this literature.

Practices are what people say and do and practices often cite norms (such as gender norms, class norms, etc.) (Gregson and Rose, 2000). For example, walking flamboyantly is a practice; it is something that people do and it cites a feminine gender norm. A fascinating further corollary of the concept of practice is that "particular [practices] articulate their own spatialities, as opposed to being just located in space" (Gregson and Rose 2000, 447). For example, out of the practices that produce gender norms arise gendered bathrooms, which are not simple practices, but more permanent, powerful, and telling spaces/spatialities. Applying these ideas surrounding practice to our understanding of mindfulness practice brings our attention to the fact that mindfulness practice is something people say or do, cites norms, and produces distinct spatialities (I will explore these ideas in greater detail throughout this project).

³ The word, 'effectively' is important here, for mindfulness practices are *not* the only activities that cultivate mindful awareness. Indeed, one could say that life, *simply lived*, cultivates mindful awareness. The key point is that what distinguishes mindfulness practices from other activities is that they have been honed, tweaked, and perfected for millions of years in order to *effectively* increase mindful awareness (Young, 2005).

With a broad understanding of the modern American mindfulness movement, mindful awareness, and mindfulness practice under our belt, we can now turn toward the Brooklyn Zen Center (hereafter referred to as the BZC), which is an example of the organizations that make up the modern American mindfulness movement.

The BZC

During the summer of 2005, Greg Snyder and Laura O'Loughlin decided to start a mindfulness group in the tradition of the San Francisco Zen Center. By September, they had transformed the basement of a residential apartment in Park Slope, Brooklyn into a small zendo and had begun to offer morning and evening mindfulness sits on weekdays. When Greg and Laura decided to host Saturday morning meditations combined with going out to lunch afterward, attendance and a strong sense of community grew. They soon realized that they needed to find a larger space (Case, 2013).

In May of 2008, they moved into another residential apartment near by. Alongside regular sits and retreats, the BZC began a Jazz Mindfulness program for local youth. Soshin Teah Strozer (the head teacher that I mentioned in the opening vignette) and other teachers from the San Francisco Zen Center visited often in order to lead retreats and offer teachings. Once again, the BZC found itself outgrowing its space and decided to move (Case, 2013).

The BZC looked at a few spaces before deciding in the fall of 2009 to move into a space at 505 Carroll St in Gowanus, where they still are today. This location

required substantial renovation, so the BZC raised funds and recruited volunteers. Floors were redone; walls erected; bathrooms painted; an industrial kitchen installed; glorious Zen meditation bells placed; and to top it all off: a close friend of Greg handmade a cupboard using a tasteful selection of oak lumber to house the tea and tea cups (Case, 2013).

Today, Teah spends six months of the year teaching full time at the center. The only other paid leader in the BZC community is Greg, who serves as the executive director. The rest of the people who help to run the BZC have other jobs and volunteer their time and energy. And after visiting the center several times, I am not surprised that so many people spend so much time volunteering for a strong sense of community, warmth, and energy saturates the space (Case, 2013).

The BZC currently runs a diverse array of programs including: a 12-step sangha, a People of Color Group, meditation for young folk (of which the Awake Youth Project that I mentioned in the opening vignette is an example), meditation in underserved Brooklyn high schools, and art programs (Case, 2013). Such programming empowers participants and is an example of the BZC's focus on *social justice*.

Social justice is defined in several ways in different contexts. Most commonly, social justice is defined as both a *process* and a *goal*. The process of social justice is characterized by a focus on democracy, participation, inclusivity, the affirmation of human agency and human capacity, authenticity, reciprocity, and transformation. Further, the process of social justice involves collaborative efforts such as coalition building, community engagement, and continual learning on the

part of change agents (Adams, 1997). The goal of social justice can be summarized as,

Movement towards a society where all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure, where individuals are able to develop their full capacities and interact democratically with others, and where the distribution of resources is more equitable and reflective of common humanity (Adams, 1997).

Importantly, within the social justice conceptual framework, *the process is just as important as the goal* (Adams, 1997). For example, if a group of students is preparing a presentation on equality, no student should dominate the preparation process (an equity monitor might make sure that each student speaks as much as the other students, students may take turns taking notes, etc.).

Social justice processes and goals often revolve around salient social group identities such as gender, race, class, sexual orientation, religion, age, physical and mental ability, ethnicity, nationality, and body size (Adams, 1997). All of the themes that I have thus far introduced occur at a variety of scales, both large and small. We therefore now turn toward an exploration of scale.

Scale

As a starting point, one can think of scale as,

A 'vertical' differentiation in which social relations are embedded within a hierarchical scaffolding of nested territorial units stretching from the global, the supra-national, and the national downwards to the regional, the metropolitan, the urban, the local, and the body (Brenner in Marston 2005, 416).

In other words, scale can be thought of as a set of ‘nested Russian dolls’ ranging from the body to the global. Additionally and importantly, in geographic literature, this way of conceptualizing scale is often accompanied by hierarchical relations between the scales (i.e. events/forces that occur at large scales – such as the global – exert greater causal power than events/forces that occur at small scales – such as the body) (Marston, 2005; Hyndman, 2004). The classic example is *global* capitalism. Within studies that conceive of scale hierarchically, global capitalism is portrayed as a powerful force compared to a local work exchange.

However, there are several critiques of this conception of scale and the hierarchical thinking that goes along with it. For example, feminist geopolitics argues for an affirmation of the importance of causes and effects that take place at the scale of the body and in the consideration of ‘the everyday’ in geographic research (Hyndman, 2004; Marston, 2005).

Now that we have explored the central themes of my project, let’s review and integrate them.

My project: a deeper look

Let’s briefly review what we’ve learned:

1. Cultural capital

- a. Before we defined cultural capital, we defined class as three intertwined axes: economic position, social position, and race.

- b. We defined cultural capital as intellectual or other knowledge that reflects/reproduces socio-racial-economic relations.

2. Gentrification

- a. We defined gentrification as the local improvement of housing and infrastructure and the associated displacement of one socio-racial-economic class from their neighborhood by a 'higher' socio-racial-economic class.
- b. We learned that gentrification reflects/reproduces socio-racial-economic tension.
- c. We learned that gentrification is happening in the neighborhoods where members of the BZC live and that therefore the BZC is entangled with the process of gentrification.

3. Mindfulness

- a. We learned about the history of the modern American mindfulness movement, that the movement is predominantly made up of the upper-middle class, and that the movement therefore reflects/reproduces socio-racial-economic tension.
- b. We defined mindful awareness as the use of three core attentional skills: concentration power, sensory clarity, and equanimity.
- c. We defined mindfulness practice as any practice that effectively develops mindful awareness.
- d. More broadly, we defined practice as what people say and do that cite norms and creates distinct spatialities.

4. The BZC

- a. We learned that the BZC is an example of the organizations that make up the modern American mindfulness movement.
- b. We learned about the basic history of the center and about the BZC's current offerings and sense of community.
- c. We learned that the BZC is focused on social justice, which is an inclusive, democratic, etc. process aimed at collaborative, equally distributed, etc. social change.

5. Scale

- a. We defined scale as a set of nested Russian dolls ranging from the body to the global.
- b. We learned that in geographic literature, a hierarchical relation between scales often accompanies scalar discourse.

If you need clarification on any of the information laid out in the above outline, please reread the relevant section of this introductory chapter (except for 3a; I haven't fully explained 3a; I will do so in Chapter Three). Now let's *relate* the above themes and ideas.

Gentrification reflects/reproduces socio-racial-economic tension (2b). The modern American mindfulness movement reflects/reproduces socio-racial-economic tension (3a). As the BZC is entangled with gentrification (2c) and the modern American mindfulness movement (4a), the BZC reflects/reproduces socio-racial-economic tension. The BZC in relation to gentrification and the modern

American mindfulness movement is a phenomenon that occurs at a larger scale (the local scale) (5a).

The modern American mindfulness movement is mostly made up of the upper-middle class (3a). Therefore, mindfulness practice and mindful awareness cite an upper-middle class norm (3b, 3c, 3d). Another way of saying this is that mindful awareness is a form of *cultural capital* for knowing about mindful awareness cites upper-middle class norms and thus reflects/reproduces socio-racial-economic relations (1b). An individual acquiring cultural capital is a process that occurs at a relatively small scale (the individual/interpersonal scale) (5a).

In the rest of my project, I continue to explore how these themes relate through analyses focused at the two scales that have emerged out of the last two paragraphs: *the local* and *the individual/interpersonal*. I first explore the local scale by asking the following question: As a local organization, how does the BZC both reflect/reproduce and challenge the socio-racial-economic tension associated with gentrification and the modern American mindfulness movement?

To give you a taste of what is to come, I explore how the BZC, through its focus on social justice, challenges such socio-racial-economic tension. This analysis complexifies our understanding of gentrification because it exposes how the BZC, an organization that is entangled in gentrification, not only reflects/reproduces but also *challenges* socio-racial-economic tension. This analysis also complexifies our understanding of the modern American mindfulness movement because it exposes how the BZC, an organization that is entangled in the mindfulness movement, not only reflects/reproduces but also *challenges* socio-racial-economic tension.

I then go on to explore the individual/interpersonal scale by asking the following question: How does the acquisition of cultural capital (in the form of mindful awareness) by members of the BZC both reflect/reproduce and challenge the socio-racial-economic tension associated with gentrification and the modern American mindfulness movement?

To give you a taste of what is to come, I explore how the transcendent and kind effects of mindfulness practice challenge such socio-racial-economic tension. This analysis complexifies our understanding of cultural capital because it shows how cultural capital not only reflects/reproduces but can also *challenges* the socio-racial-economic tensions associated with the mindfulness movement. This analysis also challenges popular scalar discourse (5b) because we see significant causes/effects on socio-racial-economic relations occurring at a small scale (the individual/interpersonal scale).

Methods and Chapter Narrative

The bulk of the data for this project comes from interactive interviews with BZC members. I discuss my interview methodology at the beginning of Chapter Three. I also visited the center many times in order to engage in participant observation. Lastly, I read relevant material from scholarly articles and books.

The project is broken up into four more chapters. The Second Chapter takes a step back from theory and analysis in order to lay out the history, current offerings, and governance of the BZC. The Third Chapter analyzes the information in the Second Chapter in an attempt to answer one of my central questions: As a local

organization, how does the BZC both reflect/reproduce and challenge the socio-racial-economic tension associated with gentrification and the modern American mindfulness movement? In the Fourth Chapter, I explore my other central question: How does the acquisition of cultural capital (in the form of mindful awareness) by members of the Brooklyn Zen Center both reflect/reproduce and challenge the socio-racial-economic tension associated with the modern American mindfulness movement? In the concluding chapter, I integrate my findings, discuss their relation to current research, and provide suggestions for future research.

Chapter Two: The History, Current Offerings, and Governance of the BZC

History

The BZC is within the lineage of the San Francisco Zen Center, which is the largest Soto Zen organization in the West. The San Francisco Zen Center is an affiliated group of practice and retreat centers in the San Francisco Bay area that was founded in 1962 by Shunryu Suzuki-roshi and his American students. Over the years, teachers and students from the San Francisco Zen Center have set up centers in Austin, TX, San Antonio, TX, and Houston, TX (ZPMC, 2014). Greg, Laura, and Ian, the three cofounders of the BZC, met in Austin, TX. Greg began practicing at the Austin Zen Center in 1998 and Laura began practicing at the Austin Zen center in 2002. Greg and Laura met Ian outside of the Austin Zen Center (Case, 2013; Snyder, 2014).

Greg and Laura moved to NYC in order to take care of a sick family member and Ian moved to NYC for graduate school. Once in NYC, Greg and Laura visited several Zen centers, yet none felt quite right. As Greg put it, “we longed for the open and softer style of Zen practice that we had in Austin.” Greg and Laura decided to bring their style of Zen to NYC by starting a sitting group originally called the Brooklyn Zen Community (Case, 2013; Snyder, 2014).

Greg kept his eyes on Craigslist and eventually found a suitable space at Park Slope and 11th St in Park Slope, Brooklyn in order to house the new Brooklyn Zen

Community. Claudia Vieira, a Zen practitioner herself, was willing to let them renovate and use her basement. The basement was small (about 10' x 20') and could only fit 17 meditation cushions. Nonetheless, Greg, Laura, and Ian began renovating the space during the summer of 2005. On September 2nd, they invited Barbara Kohn (a Zen priest and the head teacher of the Austin Zen Center) to lead a temple opening ceremony (Case, 2013; Snyder, 2014).



Figure 1: Claudia Vieira's basement, the Brooklyn Zen Community's first location.

At first, the Brooklyn Zen Community simply offered morning and evening mindfulness sits on weekdays. Soon though, they began hosting a Saturday morning sit in the hopes that more people would be available on weekends. Attendance rose as an enjoyable culture of going out to lunch after the Saturday morning sits developed. The combination of having to use the small basement space and the

Saturday afternoon lunches created a strong sense of community. With stable community interest, they invited Michael Wenger (a Zen teacher and former president of the San Francisco Zen Center) and Darlene Cohen (a Zen teacher and Laura's original teacher at the San Francisco Zen Center) to hold half-day and full-day retreats (Case, 2013).

In 2006, the Brooklyn Zen Community formed a voluntary board of directors and was incorporated as a non-profit. In 2007, they held their first five-day retreat. Retreat participants arrived at 6:30am and returned home at 9pm. Claudia let the Brooklyn Zen Community use her kitchen in order to cook three meals a day for the retreat participants and use a room in her apartment for formal interviews between students and teacher. At the end of the retreat, everyone enjoyed a delicious potluck (Case, 2013; Snyder, 2014).

The Brooklyn Zen Community invited Soshin Teah Strozer (a San Francisco-based Zen teacher and high school educator) to lead a one-day retreat. Six months later, Teah came back to lead a three-day retreat. As the community enjoyed Teah and her teachings, Teah corresponded with the community via telephone and Skype after she left. The Brooklyn Zen Community began offering a weekly Buddhist precepts discussion group. The discussion group was nothing formal or obligatory but was instead a chance to learn about the precepts among supportive friends and to experiment with implementing them in one's daily life. Interest in the Brooklyn Zen Community grew and the Saturday morning sits were often crowded, especially when there was a teacher in town. The Brooklyn Zen Community began looking for a larger space to move into (Case, 2013; Snyder, 2014).

In 2008, the Brooklyn Zen Community signed a lease for a one-bedroom apartment at 398 9th St in Park Slope, Brooklyn and officially changed their name to the Brooklyn Zen Center. Greg and Laura moved into the apartment full-time and they converted the first floor living room into a zendo that could fit 25 meditation cushions. After weekday sits, the community often drank tea together and they continued to go out to lunch after the Saturday morning sits. The apartment included a small backyard where the BZC community shared meals and spent time during the warmer months. The BZC held several more five-day retreats and began the Next Generation Initiative (what would become the Awake Youth Project). Adam Bernstein, a member of the BZC community and professional musician, started a Jazz Mindfulness Group for local youth that incorporated mindfulness into playing jazz. Teah returned to lead several retreats. With increasing attendance, the BZC once again found themselves tight for space (Case, 2013).



Figure 2: A potluck after a retreat at the 398 9th St location.

The BZC increased the size of their board of directors in order to manage the next move. At first, they looked at a place in Fort Greene, Brooklyn, but to no avail. Noah Fischer, a member of the BZC community, had contacts with PDS (a small commercial real-estate company in Gowanus, Brooklyn). Through this contact, Noah heard about a space that he thought the BZC might be interested in and so he let them know. The space was a basement at 505 Carroll St in Gowanus, Brooklyn. As the board was looking into the basement space, a second floor space in the same building opened up for a political campaign that was going to lease the second floor space decided not to run (Fischer, 2014).

After seeing the second floor space, everyone on the board of the BZC agreed that it was the perfect fit. Although much of the ceiling was black with oven soot (the space used to be a bakery), it was 3,200 square feet (three times the size of their Park Slope apartment); ten large windows made up the south wall, which provided excellent natural lighting; the space itself was a large rectangle with no internal walls, so they could erect walls in any manner they wished; because of the shape of the building, there were few neighbors, so quiet (a serious consideration for a mindfulness center) would not be a problem; it was a 15 minute walk from the Park Slope apartment and near the Atlantic Ave subway stop, so it was convenient; the owner seemed pleasant; and it was within their price range. In October of 2009, the BZC signed a lease (Case, 2013; Fischer, 2014).



Figure 3: The BZC board of directors looking at their prospective new space at 505 Carroll St. Greg is facing the camera and is wearing a tan shirt.

The board worked closely with an architect to design a floor plan and three months and many volunteers later, a new floor, electrical system, lights, and walls were in place. Soon after, an industrial kitchen was installed along with a zendo, two offices, a library, a common/eating area, a bathroom, and a mudroom. An elegant oak tea cupboard and massive meditation bells were put in place to top it all off. After the move, the BZC launched a new and improved website and Teah began spending six months out of the year at the BZC as a full time teacher (Case, 2013).



Figure 4: The BZC community in their current space at 505 Carroll St. Teah is in the center, wearing a tan robe. Lauren is to Teah's left. Ian is the right-most person.

Today, the BZC is a thriving space with a diverse array of programming including: regular mindfulness sits and retreats, Beginner's Mind Second Saturdays, the Awake Youth Project, Urban Zen, a People of Color Group, Friday Night Zen, a 12-step Sangha, the No-Eyes Viewing Wall, and various class offerings. Let's take a closer look at each of these programs.

Current Offerings

The regularly scheduled mindfulness sits include two 30-minute mindfulness practice periods, mindful walking, a chanting service, soji (communal temple cleaning), and sometimes a Dharma talk or discussion. The sits are held on Wednesday and Friday mornings and Wednesday and Thursday evenings. The Saturday morning program includes everything that is part of a weekday sit plus beginning mindfulness practice instruction and a community lunch. All BZC

mindfulness sits are by donation. In an effort to open their doors to people with little experience with mindfulness practice, the BZC recently began the Beginner's Mind Second Saturday program, which includes more time for discussion and shorter mindfulness practice periods (Case, 2013).

The Awake Youth Project's core mission is simple: to provide mindfulness and emotional intelligence training to under-served youth in Brooklyn. The BZC is committed to this mission because they are aware that certain youth populations in Brooklyn are under-served. The Brooklyn school system is based upon high-stakes testing and financial strain, abandonment, violence, and alcohol and drug abuse are common factors in the home life of Brooklyn's youth. As a result, Brooklyn's youth are under immense stress and suffer from abnormally high levels of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and suicidal ideation. Making matters worse, state governments are cutting programs that support emotional and mental health (in NYC, a high school of 2,000 is lucky to have one social worker) (AU, 2014).

The BZC created the Awake Youth Project in order to provide emotional intelligence and mindfulness training to such under-served youth. The Awake Youth Project has gone through several iterations but its current form took shape about a month after the BZC moved into their current space. Greg received a call from the Brooklyn College Community Partnership (a non-profit social justice organization focused on connecting under-served youth, local middle and high schools, high-need communities, and Brooklyn College) asking for help dealing with serious anger problems (HP, 2014). Greg ran a successful four-week mindfulness and emotional intelligence pilot program with high schoolers from the Brooklyn

College Community Partnership (Snyder, 2014).

The Awake Youth Project, through its connection to the Brooklyn College Community Partnership, has provided after school mindfulness and emotional intelligence classes at five high schools and two middle schools in Brooklyn. The Awake Youth Project currently hosts programs at John Jay High School and Robeson High School, works with between 200 and 500 youth per year, offers alternative-to-suspension programs, peer-to-peer training, and staff development and training for educators. The after school classes range from five to 25 participants and are open to all local youth, though many of the attendees hear about the program through an ever-growing network of adults, teachers, school counselors, and other non-profit organizations that are familiar with the positive impact of the program (Snyder, 2014).

In 2011, the New York Times wrote an article about the Awake Youth Project and since then, Greg has been showered by opportunities to teach and expand the Awake Youth Project. However, as Greg is the only paid staff member of the BZC, such expansion has proved difficult to manage. Tellingly, Greg has received numerous offers to teach in local private schools, but Greg has refused such offers for they run counter to the Awake Youth Project's mission to provide mindfulness training to specifically under-served youth in Brooklyn (Snyder, 2014).

Alumni of the Awake Youth Project began a Teen Meditation Group that meets twice a week at the BZC and is open to all youth in the NYC area. These sessions include mindfulness practice, mindful art, mindful cooking, documentary making, and discussions surrounding social justice. The Awake Youth Project

provides a paid internship for especially motivated high school participants that provides experience teaching mindfulness to other youth and a chance to develop professional and leadership skills. The BZC also provides mindfulness instruction for college-age folks through its Urban Zen Program (Snyder, 2014).

In 2012, Teah asked John High, one of the original members of the BZC community, to start a mindfulness program for college kids. John agreed and launched the Urban Zen Program. As John teaches creative writing at Long Island University, he has constant contact with college students, which is how the program recruits members. The group meets once a week at the BZC in order to practice mindfulness, talk about meaningful issues, sip tea, write poetry, and make art. The group has always been small; most of the time around six students show up, though sometimes there are up to 20 (High, 2014).

A central theme in Urban Zen is exploring the relationship between mindfulness and poetry. The students explore how both practices are creative, uplifting, and insightful. In 2013, Urban Zen hosted a poetry reading at the BZC with Nigerian and Nuyorican (a group of people who identify with both NYC and Puerto Rico) poets. The event attracted a diverse audience both race and age-wise (High, 2014).

When asked for a success story, John told me of a young man who was failing classes and using drugs everyday. John invited this young man to Urban Zen and over time, the young man got his act together and successfully graduated. It is clear that Urban Zen is having a powerful impact the participant's lives (High, 2014).

The BZC has also launched a Friday Night Zen Program, which is geared

toward the 25-35 age bracket. These meetings include mindfulness practice, reading, and discussion (NYCS, 2014).

The BZC has also founded a program for children ages four to 12. BZC Kids meets on the second Sunday of each month. The program offers “age-appropriate mindfulness exercises such as quiet listening, breathing and walking, along with playful activities, including singing, dance and movement, clowning and arts and crafts” (NYCS, 2014). Stuart Zalka started the program in 2012 at the request of members who wanted a way for their kids to get involved with the uplifting BZC community (Zalka, 2014).

A People of Color Group meets on the second Saturday of each month at the BZC. This program provides a safe space for people of color to learn about Zen Buddhism and to discuss issues of race and oppression within the context of Zen Buddhist teachings. These meetings include mindfulness practice and group discussion about readings, videos, news events, and personal experience (NYCS, 2014).

The BZC also runs a weekly 12-Step Sangha that incorporates mindfulness into the addiction recovery process. These meetings are for people recovering from addictions of all kinds and include mindfulness practice, reading Buddhist and 12-Step literature, guest speakers, and discussion of personal experience (NYCS, 2014).

The BZC curates an ongoing art exhibition on their No-Eyes Viewing Wall. The wall makes up the western border of the large common/eating area. Roughly three installations are put up each year and it is open to the public. Noah Fischer, the founder and director of the No-Eyes Viewing Wall, elegantly describes the

relationship between art and Zen in the following way, “art and Zen are related methods of mind-research. To engage fully in either practice, we must make a sustained effort to focus the mind, so that over time, the meditation or the creative process acts as a mind-mirror: the work shows us who we are” (NYCS, 2014).

The BZC holds multi-week classes on a variety of topics such as, Introduction to Zen Buddhism, The Four Noble Truths, and Mindful Teaching. Several Dharma talks are available for free on their website. The BZC regularly invites teachers to give talks during their Saturday morning sits (NYCS, 2014).

Governance

The governance of the BZC is as follows (remember, Greg is the only paid employee, all others volunteer their time):

Communications Committee (Chair: Abby Allen) – develops and coordinates all BZC communications, including website design and content, maintaining social networks, public and media relations, and any other necessary materials.

Development Committee (Chair: Heather Iarusso) – develops and coordinates all fundraising, membership and capital development efforts.

Finance Committee (Chair: Rachel Lawrence) – oversees finances, holdings, budget and financial strategy.

Inclusivity Committee (Chair: Brenda Loya) – oversees all diversity and inclusivity efforts, policy and programming.

Membership Committee (Co-Chairs: Yael Shy and Ian Case) – communicates with members around their needs and responsibilities, recruits and maintains membership, and maintains database and historical record.

Planning Committee (Chair: Greg Snyder) – assesses priorities and develops strategic plan to address organizational needs and growth in accordance with BZC’s mission and vision.

(NYCS, 2014)

Most of these committees are relatively straightforward and analogs can be found in other non-profits. However, the BZC's Inclusivity Committee deserves further attention. As their historical Saturday morning sits and the early founding of the Jazz Mindfulness Group for teens convey, the BZC has been focused on inclusivity from the very beginning. Yet the BZC began to focus hard on issues of inclusivity after a person of color told Greg that although he had appreciated his first mindfulness sit at the center, he would not be returning for being the only person of color in the room made him feel uncomfortable. Greg, who has a long history of social justice work including refugee resettlement and international deadly conflict resolution, was deeply impacted by this comment and has since then made inclusivity a priority for the growing center (Snyder, 2014).

The Inclusivity Committee formed in 2013 and their mission statement is as follows,

With regard to all Brooklyn Zen Center policies, programming, practices, assumptions and attitudes, this committee is tasked by our Board of Directors to monitor, evaluate and make recommendations concerning inclusivity, diversity and potential barriers to participation in an effort to ensure to the best of its ability that all individuals feel welcome, seen and heard within this community.
(NYCS, 2014)

The People of Color Group and the Beginner's Mind second Saturday program are both products of Inclusivity Committee meetings (Loya, 2014). With a broad understanding of the history, current offerings, and governance of the BZC, we can now begin to integrate themes and address questions raised in the

introduction.

Chapter Three: The BZC and Brooklyn

In this chapter, I analyze and expand upon what I presented in Chapter Two in order to address the following question, which is focused at the local scale: As a local organization, how does the BZC both reflect/reproduce and challenge the socio-racial-economic tension associated with gentrification and the modern American mindfulness movement?

Methodology

Before we dive in, a quick methodological note: I choose to present much of the qualitative data from my interviews as ‘percentages of interviewees that mentioned certain themes.’ In order to properly interpret such percentages, one must be familiar with my interview methodology. In general, I asked very open-ended questions so as not to skew answers in any direction. For example, I asked questions such as, ‘What do you like about the BZC?’ and ‘What don’t you like about the BZC?’⁴ Therefore, when I present ‘percentages of interviewees that mentioned certain themes,’ I am *not* saying that the other respondents would not agree with a said theme. Instead, the other respondents simply didn’t mention the said theme while answering an open-ended question, even though they might agree with the theme if I had asked them about it explicitly.

The take away message from this methodological discussion is simple: even low percentages are interesting and important for they mean that at least several

⁴ See Appendix for a full list of my interview questions.

people mentioned the same theme; these themes are real for multiple people in the BZC community and may be real for others who simply didn't think to mention the theme while answering an open-ended question. All this being said, and as you will see, my percentages are often surprising high, which, considering my methodology, means that certain attitudes truly saturate the BZC community.

I conducted a total of 15 interviews with BZC members, each lasting between 20 and 40 minutes. That's a total of 7.5 hours of in-depth discussion. And as you will see, significant amounts of interesting and important data came out of these discussions. In this and the next chapter, because of the more intimate nature of the data that I present, I do not mention the names of interviewees.

Senses of community at the BZC

Let us begin with an exploration of the strong sense of community at the BZC. As I mentioned in the introduction, the BZC is essentially an organization run by volunteers (Greg is the only paid employee). And when asked what they liked about the BZC, 43% of interviewees mentioned the volunteer opportunities. Volunteer opportunities include everything from ringing the meditation bells at the appropriate times to cooking for the Saturday community lunches. Four times a year, the BZC hosts 'work practice days' where members of the community are invited to spend the day helping to maintain the space while engaging in mindfulness practice. The workdays are mostly silent, so practitioners can delve into the wonders of 'mindfulness in motion.' An inordinate amount of volunteer hours were required to turn an old bakery with black soot on the ceiling in to the

sparkling meditation center that it is today. Such volunteer opportunities forge the sense of community that members of the BZC cherish by allowing members to actively participate in the production of the BZC.

The BZC also creates a sense of community by following many of the rules and regulations that come with being a Zen Buddhist temple. From the ringing of bells at very specific times to strict codes of conduct while in the zendo, from formal chanting and prostrations to elegant robes, ritual and discipline forge a sense of community at the BZC. Seventy-two percent of interviewees expressed appreciation for such ritual and discipline.

During my introduction, I mentioned how certain practices can create distinct spatialities. Here we see examples of this dynamic at the BZC: certain practices (volunteering and ritual/discipline) create a distinct spatiality (a spatiality of community).

Eating together is another practice that contributes to a spatiality of community at the BZC. As we learned in the last chapter, Saturday afternoon lunches played a key role in the early development of the BZC community. Further, when the BZC held their first retreats, everyone ate three meals together and a celebratory potluck concluded retreats. Today, the delicious lunches after the Saturday morning program are a mainstay in the culture of the BZC and they continue to function as a community builder.

Another factor that has contributed to the strong sense of community at the BZC is the size of the successive spaces that the center has inhabited. The BZC started out in a 10' x 20' basement and they then moved into a one-bedroom

apartment. Interviewees that experienced these spaces said that such tight quarters built a strong sense of community that then swung into the coming years. Limited space continues to foster a sense of community, as the current space is still small relative to attendance, especially on Saturdays and during special events.

Lastly, the beauty of the current space attracts people to the space and strengthens the community. Fifty-seven percent of respondents mentioned how much they appreciated the aesthetically beautiful and peaceful space of the current center.

When asked what they liked about the BZC, *every* interviewee mentioned the strong sense of community and used words such as, ‘warmth’ and ‘energy.’ Further, when asked about stories of disagreement or tension at the BZC, most respondents couldn’t think of any and every one that could finished by saying that the situation was dealt with very openly and lovingly, which resulted in the maintenance of relationships and quality solutions. While the BZC has certainly created a strong sense of community, is the community demographically diverse and inclusive?

Reflection and reproduction at the BZC

Every member of the BZC that I interviewed was at least working on a Bachelors degree and most had graduate degrees. Fifty percent of respondent’s annual household income was over \$100,000. Most were upper-middle class professionals such as administrators, psychologists, or lawyers. Fifty-eight percent were white⁵ and the average age was 42. Now, I only interviewed 15 people and yet

⁵ Though the percentage of white people at the BZC is probably higher than 58%.

hundreds of people make up the BZC community, so this data should not be considered representative on its own. However, whenever I visited the center, I took careful note of the age, race, and class (which is of course a largely subjective measurement) of the people around me. What I saw were overwhelmingly older, white, upper-middle class professionals⁶. As my interview data and field observations both point toward the predominance of the upper-middle class, I am tempted to say that these demographic patterns exist not only in my pool of interviewees but also in the larger BZC community and I don't think anyone at the BZC would disagree. In fact, people at the BZC not only acknowledge the lack of demographic diversity in their community, they are actively trying to change it, as I discuss in more detail below.

So while the BZC has created a tight-knit community, the community is not demographically diverse. Several interviewees brought up such a lack of demographic diversity during our discussions. Further, interviewees conveyed that such a lack of demographic diversity alienates outsiders. People of color and lower class people feel awkward and insecure at the BZC. One interviewee who is a person of color had this to report,

I don't like that it's homogenous and we don't have diversity. We are not integrated. I feel a physical need, a visceral need to have other people of color....As a person of color, I feel invisible...Sometimes I look at myself in the mirror in the bathroom and I'll see my face and I'll be like, 'wow, that's different, that's not what I thought I looked like' because when I'm in [the BZC]...I don't see a reflection of color back at me...I see so many white people around me...I merge, I blend and then I look at [myself] and [say], 'wow, very different, I look very different'...I feel unseen. It's just this segregated society that we still live in, in terms of social networks.

⁶ Also, notice the predominantly white makeup of the BZC community in the photo on page 32.

This quote conveys the alienation that people of color experience in the predominantly white space of the BZC. Also, and insightfully, our speaker conveys that the problem is much larger than the BZC when he/she says, “Its just this segregated society that we still live in, in terms of social networks.” Indeed, such a lack of demographic diversity is the result of many processes occurring at a variety of geographic scales. As we discussed in the introductory chapter, at the national scale and since the 1950s, the modern American mindfulness movement has attracted primarily people from the upper-middle class. At the local scale and over the past 15 years, gentrification has caused an influx of the upper-middle class into downtown Brooklyn neighborhoods. The BZC is entangled with the larger force of gentrification and the powerful cultural momentum of the modern American mindfulness movement. As one interviewee put it, “if you look at who goes to the BZC, it goes along with the gentrification story.”

The BZC is in the tradition of the San Francisco Zen Center and Greg, Laura, and Ian met in Austin, TX. San Francisco and Austin epitomize gentrification as much as Carroll Gardens and Park Slope. The connection between the BZC and San Francisco and Austin was strengthened when teachers from these cities visited the center. Several interviewees said that they found out about the BZC through their connections to the San Francisco Zen center. One interviewee described the BZC as a, “mini-west coast.”

The BZC is yet another space within which the socio-racial-economic tension associated gentrification and the mindfulness movement interact and solidify. Such spaces are predominantly upper-middle class and therefore make people of color

and people from the lower classes feel uncomfortable and alienated. Here, we see the BZC reflecting/reproducing the social tension associated with gentrification and the modern American mindfulness movement.

Challenging at the BZC

Put in the context of gentrification and the modern American mindfulness movement, the BZC's focus on inclusivity and social justice is unique and the results of such efforts are inspiring. *Every one of the interviewees mentioned issues surrounding inclusivity and social justice.* As someone who has spent the last four years of my life in mindfulness communities, this fact is staggering. Nowhere else have I seen an entire spiritual community so dedicated to critically examining their own practices in order to increase inclusivity and engage with local issues of social justice.

Several of the No-Eyes Viewing Wall art exhibitions have revolved around themes of social justice. Exemplary titles include: *Ms. Wallace: Gun Control Pictures*, *Awake Youth: Seven Bodies of Liberation*, and *Buddha Meets Buddha: the crossroads of love & justice*. The BZC's focus on social justice is most directly exemplified by their current campaign surrounding gun violence. The BZC is hosting a series of three panels on gun violence and a day of silence in a local park. During the day of silence, the only sounds will be the reading of names of those who have been killed by gun violence recently in NYC.

A few weeks ago, I attended one of the panels on gun violence hosted by the BZC, which brought together seven or so African American anti-gun violence

activists. During introductions, almost everyone said that they had grown up in 'the hood' and several said that what got them seriously involved in anti-gun violence activism was the gun violence-related death of their child. One member had been shot, but luckily survived.

As a white, upper-middle class country boy, I was taken aback by such introductions. I thought to myself, 'Wow, this is the real deal. I am so lucky to learn about gun violence from people who have really lived it.' Not only was the panel discussion informative, but I also had several discussions with the panelists and members of the BZC community about social justice after the panel. The panel attracted a diverse audience along axes of race, age, and class.

The BZC is collaborating with a number of local social justice organizations on the anti-gun violence campaign. Such collaboration is evidence of the BZC becoming entangled not with gentrification and the modern American mindfulness movement, but with a slew of progressive local youth empowerment and social justice organizations. An important part of social justice is inclusivity and it is therefore to the BZC's focus on inclusivity that we now turn.

Although the inclusivity committee began only last year, inclusivity has been an informal goal of the BZC since its inception. From the very beginning, all mindfulness sits and mindfulness practice instruction has been by donation. The first alternative programming available was the Jazz Mindfulness Group, which provided mindfulness classes for local youth. An important factor in the decision to move into the current space was that it was close to a subway stop, which would make it easily accessible to people without cars.

Today, the BZC's inclusivity committee, the Awake Youth Project, the Beginner's Mind second Saturday program, the People of Color Group, the 12-step Sangha, Urban Zen, Friday Night Zen, and BZC Kids all strive to open up the BZC to people from many walks of life. The membership committee offers a youth membership fee, which is less than the regular membership fee. The BZC also invites diverse speakers such as angel⁷ Kyodo Williams (the world's second Black female Zen teacher and author of one of the quotes at the beginning of this project), African American gun violence activists, and Nuyorican and Nigerian poets. Such speakers make people of color and others who do not exactly fit in at the center feel more welcome and comfortable.

About a month ago, I attended angel's talk at the BZC. angel talked about her experience as a person of color in a predominantly upper-middle class Zen Buddhist culture. She simultaneously felt drawn to a meaningful practice yet repulsed by the lack of diversity in her community. She used to think to herself, "My girls are on the basketball court" and "How do I love a community where I feel alien?" At the end of the talk, after a few white people had asked questions, angel asked that the people of color in the room ask the next questions. angel's story of tension between exclusion and love is a story that people of color at the BZC could relate to and the way in which she asked people of color to ask questions created a space of empowerment for people of color at the BZC.

A central component of the BZC's inclusivity efforts is the Awake Youth Project. While the BZC may appear homogenous during their Saturday morning

⁷ angel chooses not to capitalize the first letter of her first name.

programs, who attends the bi-weekly Teen Mindfulness Group sits? Who attends the Awake Youth Project after school programs at under-served Brooklyn high schools? In general, its people of color who are very much not part of the upper-middle class. If one were to formally include these populations in the BZC community, the demographic diversity of the BZC would change dramatically for the Awake Youth Project works with between 200 and 500 youth in under-served, predominantly African American communities every year. In a way, then, the BZC community is already diverse and inclusive.

On the homepage of the BZC website, the first three links are, “about bzc,” “our meditation schedule,” and “our commitment to inclusivity.” Any list of links on an organization’s homepage conveys what the organization wants people to know about their organization. In the case of the BZC, we need to know ‘about bzc,’ which seems reasonable. Next, we need to know the ‘meditation schedule,’ which also seems very reasonable. *And the next thing we need to know is that the BZC is committed to inclusivity.* Such an ordering of homepage links conveys that the BZC prioritizes inclusivity about as much as their meditation schedule. This is certainly unusual in the modern American mindfulness movement and when one clicks on the ‘our commitment to inclusivity’ link, inspiration ensues:

The community of the Brooklyn Zen Center acknowledges that suffering is a human condition often intensified by the biases, prejudices, behaviors and societal structures that favor or harm individuals and peoples because of race, class, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, ability, political party, religious commitment or other beliefs and positions. We welcome and affirm all who come here in search of freedom from habits that cause suffering, and who will work toward respectful acceptance of others across our many differences, harmonizing the one and the many (NYCS, 2014).

This statement powerfully conveys the BZC's focus on inclusivity. Such a focus on inclusivity has greatly impacted the space of the BZC. One interviewee who is a person of color had this to say,

When I'm in a dominantly white space outside the BZC...people can be very superficial and fake, for lack of a better word. But here at the Zen center, people aren't fake, people are really genuine and I think that when I'm outside [the center]...white people can sometimes make me feel, 'you are the black person in the room now' and when I'm here, I don't really feel race, its' not something that's in my face because people here are very genuine. And even if they're thinking something, people just say what's on their minds and it's...not in a [negative] way. And in meditation, there is a lot of things with speech...so if they do say something, its not in a way where I feel attacked, its more of, 'ok, I'm just trying to learn'...And I think people actually value my opinion here. When I'm outside [the center], I don't think people care about my opinion or what I think or how I'm feeling or what...I know...because the white people are just concerned about themselves...and they think they have the answers. And here, people just ask me about what I think about all types of things all the time...I feel like I'm more valued here...Coming here is like going to Narnia.

This quote conveys that this person of color feels more comfortable at the BZC than in other predominantly white spaces. He/She feels seen, heard, and accepted⁸. This is evidence of the success of the BZC's inclusivity efforts.

When asked what the relationship is between the BZC and the larger Brooklyn Community, one interviewee said simply, "to create peace." This quote succinctly conveys the BZC's passion for social justice and inclusivity. Here we see a specific practice (the BZC's efforts for social justice/inclusivity) creating a distinct

⁸ Such a sentiment is, of course, in direct opposition to the alienation conveyed in an earlier quote from another person of color. Yet there is certainly room for both perspectives in our analysis. The BZC can be entangled with gentrification and the modern American mindfulness movement (which creates spaces of alienation) and at the same time, through efforts for inclusivity and social justice, succeed in creating spaces of comfort. Each interviewee is hitting upon real trends that manifest at the BZC.

spatiality (a spatiality of social justice/inclusivity). The BZC's focus on social justice and inclusivity thus challenges the socio-racial-economic tension associated with gentrification and the modern American mindfulness movement.

The latter interviewee also mentions that people at the BZC are “just trying to learn.” There is an eagerness to learn about issues of race and inclusivity at the BZC. And this points to the fact that increasing inclusivity and working through the biases that underlie segregation can't be done over night. Instead, such work is a long, difficult, and self-reflective process that each individual must go through and must be willing to go through. The role of mindful awareness in this process is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Four: Buddha meets Buddha

In this chapter, I analyze data from my interviews with members from the BZC in order to address the following question, which is focused at the individual/interpersonal scale: How does the acquisition of cultural capital (in the form of mindful awareness) by members of the Brooklyn Zen Center both reflect/reproduce and challenge the socio-racial-economic tension associated with the modern American mindfulness movement? Let's begin with a review of some of what we've learned so far.

Reflection and reproduction at the BZC

The modern American mindfulness movement is mostly made up of the upper-middle class. Therefore, mindfulness practice and mindful awareness cite an upper-class norm. Another way of saying this is that mindful awareness is a form of *cultural capital* for knowing about mindful awareness cites upper-middle class norms and thus reflects/reproduces socio-racial-economic relations. As the BZC is a space where cultural capital (in the form of mindful awareness) is acquired, the BZC reflects/reproduces socio-racial-economic tension. However, I asked members of the BZC how mindful awareness affects how they interact with people who are different from them and this is what they said.

Challenging at the BZC

Most interviewees mentioned three themes in regards to how mindful

awareness allows them to challenge socio-racial-economic tension: subjective spaciousness, openness, and connection. Let's start with an exploration of subjective spaciousness.

When explaining how their mindful awareness affects interpersonal interactions, 42% of interviewees mentioned the perception of a larger, subjective⁹ space (recall what I said at the beginning of the Third Chapter about how to interpret my percentages). What the interviewees are describing is somewhat abstract and may be difficult for people without much experience in mindfulness practice to relate to. I will share the words the interviewees used and then elaborate as clearly as I can. One interviewee said the following,

[Mindfulness opens] up some space in-between when things happen or you have certain thoughts and the action...Its a much better place to be...Rather than reacting or being overwhelmed and not understanding until later...you can figure things out and make good decisions sooner.

There is a lot in this quote, so let's break it down slowly and carefully. First, this quote conveys how mindful awareness creates more subjective space within which one experiences thought and emotion (*mindfulness opens up some space...*). In

⁹ The words 'subjective' and 'objective' are used in different ways in different contexts. In this context, I use the word subjective to refer to a first-person perspective, one that is only available to the subject (as opposed to an objective, third-person phenomenon that is available to anyone). The space that the interviewees are describing is not an objective space that is 'out there' in the world. Instead, it is a space that is perceived by a subject in the first-person and is only available to that subject; no one else can perceive it. Such a subjective spatiality is quite different from the objective spatialities that we've seen so far (think back to our spaces of community, upper-middle class spaces, and spaces of social justice/inclusivity). The spaces that we've encountered in previous chapters exist at larger scales and are more objective spaces, they exist 'out there' in the world and we could point at them. However, here we see a first-person, subjective space being created at the scale of the individual body.

other words, without mindful awareness, the subjective experience of the space within which the self manifests is small and cramped; the canvas upon which you paint yourself is only 1' x 1'. However, with mindful awareness, the subjective experience of the space within which the self manifests grows; the canvas upon which you paint yourself is now 10' x 10'.

Second, this quote conveys that such an expansion of the space within which one experiences thought and emotion feels good (*...Its a much better place to be...rather than...being overwhelmed...*). In other words, and to add causal details that will hopefully increase reader comprehension, a larger space for thought and emotion means that thoughts and emotions run into each other less often; thought and emotion congestion decreases; friction between thoughts and emotions decreases; suffering decreases; it feels good. Eighty-three percent of interviewees mentioned such suffering reduction.

Third, this quote conveys that such an expansion of the space within which one experiences thought and emotion increases thought process clarity (*you can figure things out*). In other words, a larger space for thought and emotion means that you can see your thoughts and emotions more clearly. Seventy-five percent of interviewees mentioned such an increase in thought and emotional clarity.

Here we see a certain practice (mindfulness practice) creating a distinct spatiality (a larger, less suffering-ridden, and more clear subjective spatiality). Another theme that arose during my interviews was how the larger subjective space that is part of mindful awareness allows practitioners to be more open to other points of view. One interviewee put it this way,

I have a lot more interior space to take in and really see and hear viewpoints and life styles and things like that that are different from mine.

This quote conveys that the expansion of the space within which one experiences thought and emotion increases one's ability to take on other points of view. In other words, a larger space for thoughts (such as points of view) means that there is room for new thoughts (and new points of view). Ninety-two percent of interviewees said that mindful awareness helps them to consider new points of view. One interviewee described this dynamic using his/her relationship to his/her mother:

[Mindfulness practice] goes to the heart of this idea of difference...Things that would have bothered me before...Not needing to change her...knowing that I need things to be communicated in a certain kind of way and so I've picked friends and people who I'm close to...who are like that, and then she has different needs in communicating...There is no need to convince her of trying to be this person that I want her to be. She is going to be the person that she is.

Here we see a certain practice (mindfulness practice) creating a distinct spatiality (an interpersonal spatiality of openness). Another theme that arose during my interviews was that mindful awareness allows practitioners to realize the essential similarity among all people in a deep and meaningful way and how this realization nurtures genuine interpersonal connection. Fifty percent of respondents mentioned this theme. Here's how one respondent put it,

If you can see someone who is different...yet at the same time, treat them as though they weren't different. And so you accept that they're black, they're Hispanic, they're

Asian, you accept that, you see that, but at the same time you hold them in that space and you have the experience as genuine, so whatever they have to say, it has some weight to it, it's just as important to be heard.

Another respondent provided the following anecdote surrounding this theme of connection,

A couple weeks ago, I was making an effort to just be on the subway and it was kinda crowded and there were these two kids, these two black kids and they were maybe seven and nine but their parents weren't there for some reason and they were traveling alone. They were standing in front of me and they were interacting with each other. She was kinda pinching his cheeks and he was sort of allowing her to pinch his cheeks and they could tell that I was kinda looking at them and they were waiting for my reaction and I was kinda laughing with them and they were laughing with me and it was just a very natural moment in some ways and then Jay Street/Borrow Hall came up on the F train and they got off and I went on my way. I might not have had that same experience, I could have been tuned out and no one would think anything of it. But there was something really sweet about that. That we could just be there and interact with each other. But it wouldn't have happened if I had decided to zone out and not tune into what was going on and be with it.

This quote eloquently conveys the way in which mindful awareness can foster a genuine connection between people, no matter how different they are in terms of age, race, etc. Mindful awareness allowed the interviewee to see equals on the other side of the subway car and therefore, a genuine interaction ensued. Here we see a certain practice (mindfulness practice) creating a distinct spatiality (an interpersonal spatiality of connection).

angel touched on this theme of connection during the talk she gave at the BZC. She spoke of her experience receiving the Buddhist vows, which is a serious undertaking and includes an elaborate ceremony. At the ceremony, angel was the

only person of color and much younger than everyone else. At first, angel felt alienated from the space and the people around her. Yet when she looked around, she noticed that the other people, as different as they were demographically, were all seeing her in a deeply genuine way. No one was seeing race; no one was seeing age; no one was seeing class. angel only felt unconditional love, support, and connection coming from the other ceremony participants. This realization allowed angel to fall into the ceremony and embrace the people around her, not as fellow humans, but as fellow Buddhas. *She realized that there is an inherent wakefulness in everyone and that you can choose to allow the Buddha-nature within your own self to meet the Buddha-nature of others. When this happens, difference falls away and only meaningful connection remains.*

To summarize, mindful awareness creates a large, clear, and less suffering-ridden first-person subjective spatiality. Mindful awareness also creates an interpersonal spatiality of openness and connection. Such interpersonal openness and connection, which is the result of the acquisition of cultural capital in the form of mindful awareness, challenges the socio-racial-economic tension associated with the modern American mindfulness movement.

Several interviewees mentioned this theme of mindful awareness challenging socio-racial-economic tension. Every interviewee that was asked how mindfulness affects his or her daily life mentioned interpersonal interaction. One interviewee even said, “Well, that’s kind of what mindfulness practice is; it’s how you interact with others.” Thirty-three percent of interviewees used strong words such as, ‘profoundly,’ when asked how mindfulness affects how they interact with others.

Conclusion

Complexifying Cultural Capital, Gentrification, the Mindfulness Movement, and Scale

In this chapter, I review and integrate my findings, discuss their relation to current research, and provide suggestions for future research. First, let's review the many examples that we saw in which a certain practice creates a distinct spatiality (these are all rough quotes from earlier chapters):

1. Certain practices (volunteering and ritual/discipline) create a distinct spatiality (a spatiality of community) at the BZC.
2. Eating together is another practice that contributes to a spatiality of community at the BZC.
3. A specific practice (the BZC's efforts for social justice/inclusivity) create a distinct spatiality (a spatiality of social justice/inclusivity).
4. Certain practices (mindfulness practice) create a distinct spatiality (a large, clear, and less suffering-ridden first-person subjective spatiality).
5. Certain practices (mindfulness practice) create a distinct spatiality (an interpersonal spatiality of openness and connection).

My research provides many examples of how certain practices create distinct spatialities. Further, noting how practices create spatialities increased the potency of my analysis as it drew my attention to important processes at the BZC (the way in

which eating together creates community, how their focus on social justice empowers youth, how mindfulness practice creates openness, etc.). As understanding space (its characteristics, its construction, etc.) is a central focus of geographic research, the analytical lens of ‘practices creating spatialities’ should be in every geographer’s tool kit. I strongly encourage future research to take advantage of this powerful analytic lens.

Second, let’s review popular conceptions that we learned about in the introductory chapter:

- A. Most social scientists think cultural capital reflects/reproduces socio-racial-economic tension.
- B. There are numerous studies that show how gentrification reflects/reproduces socio-racial-economic tension.
- C. The modern American mindfulness movement reflects/reproduces socio-racial-economic tension.
- D. In geographic literature, a hierarchical relationship between scales often accompanies scalar discourse.

Let’s now review data from my research that both supports and also complexifies these popular understandings:

- i. The BZC reflects/reproduces the social tension associated with gentrification and the modern American mindfulness movement.

- ii. The BZC's focus on inclusivity and social justice challenges the socio-racial-economic tension associated with gentrification and the mindfulness movement.
- iii. Interpersonal openness and connection, which is the result of the acquisition of cultural capital in the form of mindful awareness, challenges the social tension associated with the modern American mindfulness movement.

How does my research (i-iii) support and complexify popular understandings of cultural capital, gentrification, the modern American mindfulness movement, and scale (A-D)? First, let's discuss gentrification.

My research shows how the BZC, which is an organization that is entangled with gentrification, reflects/reproduces socio-racial-economic tension (i). However, my research also shows that the BZC challenges socio-racial-economic tension (ii). Therefore, my research counters the current trend in social science literature that focuses on how gentrification solely reflects/reproduces social tension (B). As my research shows evidence of the bi-directionality of gentrification, my research complexifies our understanding of gentrification. Next, let's discuss the modern American mindfulness movement.

My research shows how the BZC, which is an organization that is entangled with the modern American mindfulness movement, reflects/reproduces socio-racial-economic tension (i). However, my research also shows that the BZC challenges socio-racial-economic tension (ii). Therefore, my research counters the

commonly held view that the modern American mindfulness movement solely reflects/reproduces socio-racial-economic tension (C). As my research shows evidence of the bi-directionality of the mindfulness movement, my research complexifies our understanding of the mindfulness movement. Next, let's discuss cultural capital.

My research shows how cultural capital, in the form of mindful awareness, challenges socio-racial-economic tension (iii). Therefore, my research counters the current trend in social science literature that conceives of cultural capital solely as a reflector/reproducer of socio-racial-economic tension (A). As my research shows evidence of the bi-directional nature of cultural capital, my research complexifies our understanding of cultural capital.

Future research should be weary of saying that any process as large and complex as gentrification, the modern American mindfulness movement, or cultural capital solely reflects/reproduces socio-racial-economic relations. Instead, researchers should always be asking, 'Where is there reflection/reproduction and where is there challenging?' Next, let's discuss scale.

My research clearly shows the how practices at the interpersonal scale challenge socio-racial-economic tension (iii). Therefore, my research counters the hierarchical relationship between scales that is popular in scalar discourse (D). As my research shows evidence of causal power at the scale of the individual/interpersonal, my research complexifies our understanding of scale.

Future research should consider the causal power of smaller scales such as the individual/interpersonal. As I mentioned in the introductory chapter, such

theoretical emphasis exists in some feminist geo-political thought, though it is marginalized. I also see an emphasis on the casual power of the individual/interpersonal in Bruno Latour's actor-network theory (Latour, 2005). My research supports this marginalized, small-scale conception of scale.

Many social scientists may be appalled at the loss of explanatory power that comes with the de-centering of large-scale forces (such as global capitalism) in order to look at interpersonal interaction. However, I think that such a reordering is not only more accurate, but more meaningful and productive in certain situations.

For example, in my research we discovered how gentrification and the modern American mindfulness movement were not the only forces acting upon socio-racial-economic relations. We also saw how individuals acquiring mindful awareness challenged socio-racial-economic tension. Realizing the causal power of individuals complexified our understandings and cheered up our hope for change.

Another, more broad example: Instead of teaching undergraduates that corporate power will always and forever decide the course of humanity, you can teach undergraduates that corporate power doesn't completely control how *they* spend *their* money on a daily basis. Instead of creating a sense of hopelessness aimed at a vague conception of 'corporate power,' such a small scale-centered framework encourages the enactment of one's highest values in one's smallest of deeds. A theoretical emphasis on the small-scale, on the everyday empowers change agents and produces real, quantifiable solutions. We mustn't miss the trees while looking at the forest.

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Appendix

Interview Questions

Member Interview Questions

Age -

Gender -

Race -

Highest level of education completed -

Current occupation -

Yearly household income (under \$50,000, between \$50,000 and \$100,000, over \$100,000) -

How did you find mindfulness and the BZC?

What do you like about the BZC?

What don't you like about the BZC?

Can you describe the specific mindfulness technique or techniques that you practice?

When and for how long do you practice?

In general, how does your mindfulness practice affect your daily life?

Does mindfulness affect how you interact with people who are different from you? If so, how?

Can you think of any examples?

(If mostly say positive things, ask: Can you think of ways in which your mindfulness practice has negatively affected how you interact with people who are different from you? Can you think of any examples?)

What do think are the possibilities in regards to mindfulness practice affecting how we interact with people who are different from us?

If have time:

(Do you have any funny stories about the BZC?)

(Do you have any stories of disagreement or tension at the BZC?)

(If not white, ask: How do you feel as a person of color at the BZC? Does the space of the BZC feel different than other spaces in Brooklyn? If so, how?)

Program Head Interview Questions

Age -

Gender -

Race -

Highest level of education completed -

Current occupation -

Yearly household income (under \$50,000, between \$50,000 and \$100,000, over \$100,000)

You are involved with _____, correct? Can you tell me about the program's history and goals?

The BZC is an organization that has a relationship with the larger Brooklyn community. Can you describe this relationship?

Can you think of any specific examples of what you are saying?

(If he or she says mostly positive things, ask: Can you think of any negative aspects of the relationship between the BZC and the larger Brooklyn community? Can you think of any specific examples of what you are saying?)

In general, how does your mindfulness practice affect your daily life?

Does mindfulness affect how you interact with people who are different from you? If so, how?

Can you think of any examples?

(If mostly say positive things, ask: can you think of ways in which your mindfulness practice has negatively affected how you interact with people who are different from you? Can you think of any examples?)

If you have time:

(Can you think of a success story?)

(Can you think of a failure story?)

(Do you have any funny stories about the BZC?)

(Do you have any stories of disagreement or tension at the BZC?)

(If not white, ask: How do you feel as a person of color at the BZC? Does the space of the BZC feel different than other spaces in Brooklyn? If so, how?)